

Tuesday night Bible study notes and recap from Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Scriptures studied: Luke 10:38-42, Luke 11:1-4, Matthew 6:5-8, Luke 11:5-13

Note-as always on Tuesday nights studies, several translations or read. In the Scriptures and notes to follow the New Living Translation is used.

[Luk 10:38-42 NLT]

38 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught.

40 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

41 But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!

42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

As our group discussed, there are many parts of the Bible that are a little difficult for us to accept. This is certainly true with many of the sayings and teachings of Jesus. It is very helpful to us to study the Bible with the premise of the infallibility and authority of Scripture. With that being said, it is also critical to study the Bible with the premise of the infallibility of the words of Jesus.

In this event, many questions come up. Was Jesus treating Martha harshly? Was Martha's argument invalid? As we discussed, it was the culture in those days for a get together of this type to be accompanied by a meal. Hospitality was very important. It is also apparent that Martha had what we would refer to as the gift of hospitality. Producing a meal of this size required much work and focus and was certainly a blessing for Jesus and all who were hearing his teaching. It also gave respect to the guest of honor, Jesus. When it comes to the identification of priorities, however, Jesus must have the last word. The words Jesus used seem to indicate that Martha was unnecessarily anxious about the meal preparations. It is possible for us to apply a great attention to detail without being anxious. It also would appear that Martha was not only requesting help from Mary but was at the same time judging Mary for her choice of where to focus her attention. In our discussion, we recognized that there would be unanswered questions. Since attention to Jesus's teaching was the one important priority, it is not clear whether Jesus would have preferred Martha to forsake her meal preparations and focus on Jesus's teaching as well.

[Luk 11:1 NLT]

1 Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Unlike some of the other accounts in the Gospels, we can see here that Jesus's instruction on how to pray is requested by his disciples. The question was raised as to why the disciples referenced the way John the Baptist taught his disciples. After watching Jesus pray it was likely they had an understanding that there was more to prayer than just reciting written prayers. Perhaps John the Baptist also taught this principle to his disciples, some of whom were now Jesus's disciples. Before discussing the verses that follow, we read through Matthew 6:5-8. These verses are very helpful to study along with Luke 11:1-4.

[Mat 6:5-8 NLT]

5 "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. 6 But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Jesus teaches the importance of proper motives in prayer. In this context, private prayer avoids temptation to impress or influence others with our verbal prayers.

7 "When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.

The pagans put their trust in their ability to choose the right words and know the proper incantations that will get desired results from their god(s), our trust is to be in the power and love of our father in heaven who delights in giving good things to his children who ask. One important point that was brought up in our discussion is that we should not mistake the command to avoid "vane repetitions" for instruction to not be persistent in our prayer life and continue to ask for what we need. This principle is addressed later in our study.

8 Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

Luke 11:2-4- because the purpose of prayer is not to inform God of what we want or need (Matthew 6:8), these verses should be not as a prayer to recite in order to get what we want, but instruction on using prayer to align our wills with the will of God. Verses 2 through 4 instruct us on how to incline our hearts toward the will of God through our prayers.

2 May your name be kept holy,

(Hallowed be your name)-our first and foremost desire should be that the answering of our prayers would glorify God.

2 May your Kingdom come soon

Some translations add "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". In the heart of the Jewish believer, there was an ever-present hope of living in the perfect righteousness of the Messiah's Millennial Kingdom. All that is prayed for should be aligned with this righteousness. Selfish prayers for personal power, wealth, destruction of enemies, etc. would not stand. It is not possible to pray for God's righteousness and justice to prevail while at the same time praying from a heart that loves the world. Whatever we pray for should come from a desire in our hearts to see God's will, not our will be done. Jesus's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane was a perfect example. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me, but nevertheless not my will but your will be done".

3 Give us the food we need

(NKJ translation says “give us day to day our daily bread). Due to time constraints, this verse was not addressed in our discussion. Based on my own in-depth study of these verses, I would like to suggest a possible additional application for today, in an age when our food for the day is already in our refrigerators. “Our daily bread” may also be our provision, our increase, our receiving of wisdom, our solving of today’s problems. Jesus said when he was tempted to turn the stones into bread to ease his hunger, “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4) Our prayer should be that God would give us this daily bread according to what he knows to be best for us this day. (Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God) at the beginning of Luke chapter 5, God’s giving of daily bread to the disciples was not the daily bread they had prayed for, no doubt. They fished all night and did not catch a thing. The daily bread for the next day, however, was given when Jesus told them to cast their nets down and they hold up a huge catch. This event led to the Apostle Peter’s conversion.

4 and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

As discussed, when we are saved, we are forgiven of all of our sin past present and future. We do not need to continue to ask for this forgiveness every day. The forgiveness of sins here points to the realignment, restoration of fellowship with God, and cleansing from all unrighteousness taught in 1John 1:9. Being willing to forgive others who sin against us is an absolute necessity in order to receive cleansing and right standing with God. Jesus instructs us to acknowledge our responsibility to forgive others as we confess our sins daily through prayer.

4 And don’t let us yield to temptation

NKJ translation says “do not lead us into temptation (or to be tested), but deliver us from the evil one. Our desire here should be not only for God to help us not to yield to temptations but preferably, lead us around them in order to avoid them. Example: a gambling addict understands how important it is to keep their foot on the gas pedal when they are driving past a casino! God will lead us in a path away from temptation if we are willing to walk in obedience to him through all the situations that come along. It is, often times, our disobedience in the small things that brings the consequences that tests us. It is always better to obey immediately when it is relatively easy.

The last section of scripture that we discussed was the Parable of the persistent friend.

[Luk 11:5-13 NLT]

5 Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him,

6 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.'

7 And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.'

8 But I tell you this--though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.

Since this parable is an instruction attached to his teaching on how to pray, it is unavoidable that we are taught here the type of persistent attitude that we should pray with. We are taught that whatever we ask for if it is according to the will of God, it will be given to us. Therefore, if we are asking God for something that we know is according to his will or promise for us and we have not received it yet we are to continue praying with a persistent certainty that he will provide us with what we ask or a direct answer. In our discussion, we acknowledged that persistence in prayer is something that most of us need to work on. We also discussed that this type of "shameless persistence" in our prayers is a way for us to express the urgency of our needs and, unlike many people, God is not offended by this. Persistent prayer also reflects faith in God who hears our prayers and delights in giving his children what they ask for.

9 "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.

10 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 "You fathers--if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead?

12 Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not!

13 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

In verses 9-10, Jesus makes a powerful promise to those who are persistent. Jesus uses the natural love that a parent has for their children to break through the notion of God being a powerful but impersonal God and helps us to see him as the perfect loving father who delights in giving good things to his children.